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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [ECON](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BAGHDAD EPRT: SUNNIS CONTINUE RECONCILIATION
DIALOGUES, MEET BATTALION COMMANDERS

REF: BAGHDAD 2670

Classified By: EPRT TEAM LEADER ERIC WHITAKER, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B,D).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a Baghdad 2 BCT E-PRT reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: This July 31 meeting followed one of July 24 (septel); the main thrust was for Human Rights Advisor to the Vice President Al-Jaboori and his team to get to know BCT battalion commanders and thereafter engage with them in weekly meetings. At the brigade commander/E-PRT level, he wished for biweekly consultations. Overall, Al-Jaboori is seeking a network of Sunni contacts with U.S. military elements throughout the greater Baghdad area, in part to address rising dissatisfaction with the pace of reconciliation and reform at the national level. Each 2BCT/2ID battalion commander outlined his security district and talked about the special circumstances and challenges faced. Al-Jaboori pointed out that we are now engaging sheikhs and had apparently decided that neighborhood and district councils were not effective; while we concurred with the former, we countered that we supported both neighborhood and district councils, trained members, and planned to continue working with a broad spectrum of civil society members. End summary.

[1](#)3. (C) Participants:

Human Rights Advisor to the VP Omar Al-Jaboori
Dr. Kheder Shukur
Ahmed Muneim (Fadhil)
Hammad Khalaf (Zayuna)
Omar Hadith
Ahmed Idham
Ghalabe Ibrahim
Samuel Al-Jaboori
2BCT/2ID Brigade Commander COL Jeffrey Bannister
LTC Carl Alex
LTC James Phillips
LTC Troy Perry
LTC Wayne Grieme
LTC Ralph Kauzlarich
MAJ Stephen Pomper
Baghdad 2 E-PRT Team Leader Eric P. Whitaker

Al-Jaboori Sees Common Goals, Seeks Regular Meetings

[1](#)4. (C) The four-hour meeting, held on July 31 in an office of the Vice Presidency in the International Zone, involved the participation of above-named individuals to discuss efforts to promote sectarian reconciliation within the political districts of Rusafa, 9 Nissan, and Karada.

[1](#)5. (C) Al-Jaboori thanked the group for coming, and expressed optimism for Sunni) BCT dialogue in making progress toward common goals. He referred to the effort as "one team," and

emphasized parallel lines in obtaining community services and countering criminal elements to include Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM) and al-Qaida. "Mutual trust is our asset," he added, and we are in "one basket, working together." Al-Jaboori said that he is reaching out to CF brigades through the Baghdad area, and systematically developing ties between them and his representatives. Sunni leaders are collecting detailed information about al-Qaida, including neighborhood information collectors, and are supporting recruiting efforts for the ISF. While the JAM is concentrated on Baghdad's east side, which resulted in many Sunnis fleeing, they are also present on the west side of the capital.

¶6. (C) Al-Jaboori said he wants Sunnis to "wake up," and participate in the political process. He said the government is trying to stop this, and block reconciliation, to the disappointment of Sunnis. He noted the appearance of President Bush and Prime Minister al-Maliki on television, and said President Bush wants the political agenda to carry on, while the Prime Minister is pushing, reportedly, for Gen. Petraeus to be replaced. What we need, is for the government to abide by its agreement, and solve political issues directly.

Bilateral Talks, Regional Support, Sunni-Shia Mtgs. Key

¶7. (C) E-PRT Team Leader Whitaker mentioned continuing, high-level USG interest in the Iraqi political situation, and noted the current visit of Sec. Rice and Sec. Gates to Saudi Arabia in search of regional support. Even though the Council of Representatives had decided to recess during the month of August, that window should be seen as an opportunity for Sunni and Shia leaders to pursue reconciliation aside

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from media attention.

BN Commanders Outline Security Districts, Challenges

¶8. (C) After Al-Jaboori introduced his team members, each BCT battalion commander outlined his security district and described its unique features and challenges:

a) LTC Alex talked about Abu Nuwas, the Shorja market, the Sunni enclave of Fadhil, the Medical City area, the five bridges over the Tigris River, the two Joint Security Stations (JSS), and several protected markets. He also spoke of previous meetings with residents of Fadhil and the linked Shia community of Abu Saifan to reduce violence between them and sniping incidents involving local markets and CF/ISF. This had been successful, with 75 days of subsequent peace. Although the request for armed community watches had been denied, the CF is assisting in recruitment efforts for the IP. The CF is working with both to try to provide electricity, sewer and trash service, and assist with medical care and food rations. Medical City guards have been replaced, and the new ones are better. Furthermore, the IA will escort people seeking medical care, if need be. This also addressed the problem of body snatching from the morgue and of kidnapping those coming to the morgue to retrieve their deceased relatives.

b) LTC Grieme said Zafaraniya hosted 4,000 Shia, Sunni, and Christian IDPs. Security meetings are held each Saturday, although it is difficult to get Sunnis to participate; issues of concern include IEDs. Two neighborhoods have held council elections) Diyala and Zafaraniya) although the one in Sindbad had not been successful. Engineer Omar Hadith said that after 1990 land in Sindbad had been given to "outsiders," with JAM becoming prevalent due in part to high unemployment, despite the area having well educated residents and being well off previously.

c) LTC Perry discussed combat outposts (COPs) and JSSs in his district, and combined patrols with the IA. He spoke of the Sunni majority in Zayuna and Somer neighborhoods, as opposed to higher Shia concentrations as one went further south down the Karada peninsula. LTC Perry also mentioned the "1000 man initiative" to clean streets. VBIEDS, IEDs, and small arms fire are all security issues. Hamad Khalaf said Zayuna was indeed mostly Sunni, but that outsiders were moving in. What had once been a Christian area was now under JAM influence. He complained that four Sunni mosques in Baghdad al-Jadida had been closed, and that Zayuna and New Baghdad IP had been infiltrated by the JAM.

d) LTC Phillips said his district had two muhallahs that are part of Zayuna. He mentioned COPs and JSS, as well as the presence of squatters. The JAM kidnaps and intimidates the local population, and engages in drive-by shootings, including of the ISF. LTC Phillips also talked about the placement of 1900 security barrier walls, which had resulted in no VBIED incidents since their installation, and an estimated \$1.2 million in projects. Although water, sewer, and electrical systems work fairly well, the people live in fear. An Iraqi representative said that Sunnis had withdrawn from neighborhood and district councils after the bombing of the Al-Askaria mosque. Few Sunni mosques remain in the area, with six burned and twelve others closed. Sadr City accounted for an estimated 90 percent of local violence, he added.

e) LTC Kauzlarich said his district was marked by a Shia majority, with JAM throughout, headquartered in Fedaliyah. Neighborhood and district council members are JAM members or at least JAM-influenced. JAM Special Groups, having Iranian linkages, do not trust mainstream JAM. The Office of Martyr Sadr is also present in the area. Sewage and water systems work fairly well, and road paving should start soon. The Mushtal market had recently been hardened, opening it to residents more safely.

f) MAJ Pomper, briefing in place of LTC Sauer, spoke of the Shawra Wa Um Jadir (SUJ) area at the far northern end of his district, stating that it was poor and lacked a CF presence. Residents are afraid of the JAM, and do not trust the government. The Oubaidy area is also challenging, in that residents rarely deal with the CF, and an imam has openly badmouthed the CF. The neighborhood councils do not meet much. While there are Sunni enclaves, they appear to get along well. Stores are opening, infrastructure projects are underway, and people want peace. EFPs from Iran, and Iranian influence in general, are threats. The Iraqi representative said that the people of Fedeliyah did not seek municipal services; many had houses not built to standards, and did not

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want to have to reconstruct them.

Sunnis Institution Oriented, Unsatisfied with Progress

19. (C) Over lunch, Dr. Shukur said Sunnis did not have their own militias, but were rather more institution oriented. He said that Sunnis were unsatisfied with progress obtained so far in Iraq, and wanted to become more involved in a political process that saw Shias as reluctant to engage in reconciliation efforts. He said Sunnis encountered JAM at all levels; the JAM has a "power obsession," and seek to control all. The JAM is taking credit for all development activities.

110. (C) Al-Jaboori said that the CF is taking a new approach, and has decided that dealing with sheikhs is acceptable. He said it appeared that we had realized that neighborhood and district councils were not important. Al-Jaboori argued that the situation involving Iran is different from that with Syria and Saudi Arabia. He also said that Sunnis were

dissatisfied with the pace of progress in Iraq, and that he would not have approved a month leave for the Council of Representatives. Finally, he also asked for contact information regarding the responsible officer at the U.S. Embassy with respect to tribal affairs.

E-PRT: District Councils Matter, as Does Civil Society

¶11. (C) E-PRT Team Leader Whitaker said we are trying to work with multiple levels of civil society, including sheikhs. Iraqi society is complex, and it is important to work with neighborhood and district councils, NGOs, academics and other professionals, business representatives, imams, and others. The BCT and E-PRT is participating in all district council meetings, and believes they are important in providing a means for the public to express priorities and concerns to higher levels of governance. The 9 Nissan District Council, for example, includes an imam, business owners, women, Christians, professors, physicians, and sheikhs. He noted that we are training local government officials through USAID, and believed they were important in building a democratic system of governance from the bottom up, rather than waiting for high level political reconciliation.

¶12. (C) Whitaker agreed that the situation with Iran and Syria/Saudi Arabia was different, but that the USG recognized that outside forces are working to keep Iraq from becoming united and making progress. To address these influences, Amb. Crocker had engaged Iranians in Baghdad the week before, and Sec. Rice and Sec. Gates were doing so now with the Saudis.
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